THE

RCULAR LETTER

OF THE

Elders and Meſſengers

OF THE SEVERAL

APTIST CHURCHES,

ing at *Aulceſter*, *Bourton*, *Birmingham*, *romſgrove*, *Bridgenorth*, *Bewdley*, *Dudley*, *ooknorton*, *Middleton*, *Leominſter*, *Perſhore*, *tton*, *Tewkeſbury*, *Bengworth*, *Upton*, *War-ick*, *Leiceſter*, and *Worceſter*, met in ASSO-IATION at *Hooknorton*, on Monday and ueſday in the *Whitſun-Week*, 1766, main-ning the great Doctrines of *Three equal erſons in the Godhead*; *eternal* and *perſonal lection*; *the original Guilt* and *Depravity of lankind*; *particular Redemption*; *free Juſtifi-tion* by *the imputed Righteouſneſs of Chriſt*; *ficacious Grace in Regeneration*; and *the final erſeverance of the Saints*.

he ſeveral Churches they repreſent, wiſhing fulneſs of Grace and heavenly Benediction.

ar Brethren,

OU muſt be ſenſible, that we live in a day of great Corruption, both as to Doctrines and Man-; therefore we beg of you to hold faſt that Form und Words that was once delivered to the Saints. not give up or ſlight any of the glorious Doctrines he Goſpel, they are all excellent, important, and

worthy of your higheſt Regard. We perceive
Pleaſure, that the aſſociate Churches do not yet
bibe the new and faſhionable Syſtems of the pre
Day; but are well eſtabliſhed in the great Tru
above recited. Whatever others may think of t
Doctrines, do you hold them faſt; for they are
ter than Silver, Gold, or precious Stones: Thoſe
know not their Value may affect to deſpiſe them;
you are, we truſt, apprized of their worth and
hold them faſt as the Hope, Comfort and Life of y
Souls. But, while we recommend to you the D
trines of Grace, and excite you to eſteem them hi
ly, we beg you to take care you do not reſt in m
Notions. As ſome deſpiſe the good and wholeſo
Truths of God's Word; ſo others may believe
plead for them, and yet be ignorant of their real
ficacy upon the Heart. Notional Religion may ca
a Perſon far in a Chriſtian Profeſſion; but experim
tal Knowledge of Chriſt can only bring us to Heav
We know it will be in vain to plead, we have eat
drank in the preſence of the Lord; and altoget
as vain it will be to plead, that we have aſſented
the Doctrines of the Goſpel, unleſs we feel their ſa
tifying Influence on our Hearts.

Profeſſors of Religion are too ready to join w
the Men of the World in the uſeleſs, vain and ſin
Cuſtoms of it; and, it is to be feared, that the H
nours, Pleaſures, and eſpecially the Profits of the Wo
are too eagerly purſued by many amongſt you, w
name the Name of Chriſt. *Holy Brethren, partak
of the heavenly Calling, abſtain from* this *fleſhly L
which warreth againſt the Soul.* Remember that
are *not to love the World, nor the things of the Wor
We are as Strangers and Pilgrims* on Earth, and the
fore we ſhould *ſet our affections* not on things belo
but

but *on things above. The Woman clothed with the Sun had the Moon under her Feet.* Had we a proper Eſtimation of heavenly Things we ſhould not be ſo fond of earthly Enjoyments.

Conſider, Dear Brethren, whoſe you are, and whom you ought to ſerve. You profeſs to be the People of the Lord; you have declared your Attachment to Jeſus Chriſt: *Conſider then the great High-Prieſt of your Profeſſion*, who was *holy, harmleſs, undefiled, and ſeparate from Sinners*; who *went about continually doing Good:* So tread in his Steps, and imitate his example, that you may be able to ſay to others, *Be ye followers of us, as we are alſo of Chriſt.*

Moreover, Brethren, we exhort you to pay a due Regard to the public Worſhip of God, and carefully attend the Means of Grace. *The Lord loveth the Gates of Sion more than all the Dwellings of Jacob.* Forſake not therefore the aſſembling of yourſelves together; wait on the Lord and he ſhall ſtrengthen your Hearts. Shall the Lord rain Manna round about our Tents, and we not go out to gather it? Shall we ſtarve our Souls by ſuch cruel Negligence? Remember, Dear Brethren, that Attendance to the Worſhip of God in all the Branches of it, in the Sanctuary, in the Family, and in the Cloſet, is neceſſary to a growth in Grace, and a delightful Intercourſe with God. And whether in the Church, in the Family, or in the World, let it be your Care to honour the Goſpel. Many Profeſſors give themſelves too much Liberty, and walk not ſo circumſpectly as they ought: By this Means the Goſpel is ſometimes reproached; the Doctrines of Grace, and the good Ways of God brought into Contempt. If a holy Life were to adorn our Profeſſion, the Truths

of

of our holy Religion would be had in greater Eſteem; at leaſt, ſome of that Reproach, which is thrown upon them, would be wiped off: For nothing makes Religion appear ſo amiable in the Eye of the World, or ſets the Goſpel in ſo reſpectable a light, as a holy Life in thoſe that profeſs it. A Chriſtian ſhould remember that he has always ſomething to do: The Duty incumbent upon him is very extenſive. Be deſirous therefore to know the extent of your Duty; and when you know, be careful to put it into Practice. The commanding Will of God ſhould be highly regarded. Then ſhall we not be aſhamed *when we have Reſpect to all his Commandments; and in keeping of them there is great Reward.*

We would likewiſe intreat you as Brethren *to dwell together in Unity.* Stifle the firſt Riſings of Animoſity; be aſham'd of being contentious. Let the Diſciples of the Prince of Peace ſeek after, and follow the things that make for Peace. We rejoice to hear that this amiable Spirit has took place in ſome meaſure where the contrary prevailed; and we would gladly hope, that the next Year it will be ſaid, all the aſſociated Churches are in Peace amongſt themſelves. And while we exhort you to theſe neceſſary Duties, we cannot but put you in mind, that all muſt be done in the Name and Strength of Chriſt. Without Chriſt we can do nothing. In ourſelves we cannot diſcharge one Duty, reſiſt one Temptation, or ſubdue one Corruption. Let all therefore be done in the Name, and with a Dependence on the Grace of Chriſt.

And now, Dear Brethren, what ſhall we ſay more to you; *our Hearts are enlarged; we ſeek not yours, but you;* above all things we deſire your ſpiritual wel-

welfare; for this we meet together; for this we pray; for this we preach; for this we give our Advice, and wiſh we could do more. May the Love of God be ſhed abroad in your Hearts; may you grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of Chriſt; and being planted in the Houſe of the Lord, may you flouriſh and bring forth Fruit in the *Courts of our God.* Dearly beloved and longed for, follow that which is good; forſake that which is evil: *Be ſteadfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord*; and to that end may you be filled with all the Grace and fulneſs of Chriſt.

Motives to excite and ſtir you up to theſe things are at hand. Let us, in this view, remind you of the free, antient, and electing Love of God, by which ye were choſen to Salvation *thro' Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief of the Truth.* Remember the Love of Chriſt, who redeemed you by his Blood; and the great Things the Spirit of God hath done for your Souls, in the Application of that precious Blood to *purge your Conſciences from dead Works.* And may you not only think of theſe Motives; but by the Grace of God feel the Power of them on your Hearts continually.

With this beſt of Wiſhes we remain your Brethren in Chriſt Jeſus.

Sign'd *May 21 1766* on the behalf of the whole Aſſembly, by the Moderator

MAC GOWAN.

MINUTES of the ASSOCIATION,

On Monday Evening, the Meſſengers being met, ſome Time was improved in Prayer; the Letters from the Churches read; their Contents particularly conſidered; Minutes taken for the Circular Letter; and *Brother Whitmore* deſired to draw it up.

The public Meeting, on Tueſday, was opened by Brother *Mac Gowan*; Brother *Skinner* preached from *Phil.* i. 6. *Brother Beddome* prayed; *Brother James Butterworth* preached from *Rom.* xv. 10. and *Brother Jones* concluded in Prayer.

Added this Year to the ſeveral Churches	29.
Loſt by Death —— —	20.
Excluded —— ——	3.

The next Aſſociation to be at *Worceſter*, to meet on Tueſday Evening in the Whitſun-Week; Meſſrs. *Beddome* and *Aſh* to preach; in Caſe of Failure, *Brother Whitmore*.

Put up at the *Unicorn* in *Broad-Street*.

27 AP 66

WORCESTER: Printed by R. Lewis.